

Notice of Preparation

Notice of Preparation

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To: <u>State Clearinghouse</u> <u>1400 Tenth Street</u> <u>Sacramento, CA 95814</u> <small>(Address)</small>	From: <u>Caltrans - District 6 Environmental</u> <u>2015 E. Shields Avenue, Suite 100</u> <u>Fresno, CA 93703</u> <small>(Address)</small>
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Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report for the project identified below. We need to know the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. A copy of the Initial Study (☐ is ☒ is not) attached.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice.

Please send your response to Juergen Vespermann at the address shown above. We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Project Title: Tulare City Widening EA 06-48950

Project Applicant, if any: _____

Date 04-19-2021

Signature Juergen Vespermann
Title Senior Environmental Planner
E-mail juergen.vespermann@dot.ca.gov

Reference: California Code of Regulations, Title 14, (CEQA Guidelines) Sections 15082(a), 15103, 15375.

Notice of Completion and Environmental Document Transmittal

Appendix C

Notice of Completion & Environmental Document Transmittal

Mail to: State Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 3044, Sacramento, CA 95812-3044 (916) 445-0613
For Hand Delivery/Street Address: 1400 Tenth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

SCH #

Project Title: Tulare City Widening

Lead Agency: Caltrans

Contact Person: Juergen Vespermann

Mailing Address: 2015 E. Shields Ave, Suite 200

Email: juergen.vespermann@dot.ca.gov

City: Fresno

Zip: 93726

County: Fresno

Project Location: County: Tulare

City/Nearest Community: Tulare

Cross Streets: Ave 200, Paige Ave, Bardsley Ave, Tulare Ave (SR 137), Cross Ave, Prosperity Ave

Zip Code: 93274

Longitude/Latitude (degrees, minutes and seconds): ° ' " N / ° ' " W Total Acres:

Assessor's Parcel No.: Section: Twp.: Range: Base:

Within 2 Miles: State Hwy #: 137

Waterways: Tulare Canal, Elkhorn Slough

Airports: Mefford Field

Railways: Union Pacific

Schools: all schools in city

Document Type:

CEQA: ☒ NOP

☐ Draft EIR

NEPA: ☐ NOI

Other: ☐ Joint Document

☐ Early Cons

☐ Supplement/Subsequent EIR

☒ EA

☐ Final Document

☐ Neg Dec

(Prior SCH No.)

☐ Draft EIS

☐ Other:

☐ Mit Neg Dec

Other:

☐ FONSI

Local Action Type:

☐ General Plan Update

☐ Specific Plan

☐ Rezone

☐ Annexation

☐ General Plan Amendment

☐ Master Plan

☐ Prezone

☐ Redevelopment

☐ General Plan Element

☐ Planned Unit Development

☐ Use Permit

☐ Coastal Permit

☐ Community Plan

☐ Site Plan

☐ Land Division (Subdivision, etc.)

☐ Other:

Development Type:

☐ Residential: Units Acres

☐ Office: Sq.ft. Acres Employees

☐ Commercial: Sq.ft. Acres Employees

☐ Industrial: Sq.ft. Acres Employees

☐ Educational:

☐ Recreational:

☐ Water Facilities: Type MGD

☒ Transportation: Type Freeway widening & interchange improvement

☐ Mining: Mineral

☐ Power: Type MW

☐ Waste Treatment: Type MGD

☐ Hazardous Waste: Type

☐ Other:

Project Issues Discussed in Document:

☒ Aesthetic/Visual

☐ Fiscal

☐ Recreation/Parks

☒ Vegetation

☐ Agricultural Land

☐ Flood Plain/Flooding

☐ Schools/Universities

☒ Water Quality

☒ Air Quality

☐ Forest Land/Fire Hazard

☐ Septic Systems

☐ Water Supply/Groundwater

☒ Archeological/Historical

☐ Geologic/Seismic

☐ Sewer Capacity

☒ Wetland/Riparian

☒ Biological Resources

☐ Minerals

☐ Soil Erosion/Compaction/Grading

☐ Growth Inducement

☐ Coastal Zone

☒ Noise

☐ Solid Waste

☒ Land Use

☒ Drainage/Absorption

☐ Population/Housing Balance

☒ Toxic/Hazardous

☒ Cumulative Effects

☐ Economic/Jobs

☐ Public Services/Facilities

☒ Traffic/Circulation

☒ Other: Paleontology

Present Land Use/Zoning/General Plan Designation:

transportation facility, light industrial, heavy industrial, commercial, residential, public land

Project Description: (please use a separate page if necessary)

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to widen State Route 99 in the City of Tulare from just south of Avenue 200 Overcrossing to just north of Prosperity Avenue Overcrossing (post miles 25.4/30.6). One lane would be constructed in each direction in the existing freeway median to create a six-lane freeway, divided by a concrete median barrier. The existing lanes, shoulders, and ramps would be rehabilitated. In addition, the existing Paige Avenue Interchange would be reconstructed. The Paige Avenue Overcrossing would be replaced with a wider structure to add one lane in each direction and a pedestrian/bicycle shared path.

Note: The State Clearinghouse will assign identification numbers for all new projects. If a SCH number already exists for a project (e.g. Notice of Preparation or previous draft document) please fill in.

Revised 2010

Reviewing Agencies Checklist

Reviewing Agencies Checklist

Lead Agencies may recommend State Clearinghouse distribution by marking agencies below with an "X".
If you have already sent your document to the agency please denote that with an "S".

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Air Resources Board	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office of Historic Preservation
<input type="checkbox"/> Boating & Waterways, Department of	<input type="checkbox"/> Office of Public School Construction
<input type="checkbox"/> California Emergency Management Agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Parks & Recreation, Department of
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> California Highway Patrol	<input type="checkbox"/> Pesticide Regulation, Department of
<input type="checkbox"/> Caltrans District # _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Utilities Commission
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caltrans Division of Aeronautics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional WQCB # <u>5</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Caltrans Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources Agency
<input type="checkbox"/> Central Valley Flood Protection Board	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources Recycling and Recovery, Department of
<input type="checkbox"/> Coachella Valley Mtns. Conservancy	<input type="checkbox"/> S.F. Bay Conservation & Development Comm.
<input type="checkbox"/> Coastal Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> San Gabriel & Lower L.A. Rivers & Mtns. Conservancy
<input type="checkbox"/> Colorado River Board	<input type="checkbox"/> San Joaquin River Conservancy
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation, Department of	<input type="checkbox"/> Santa Monica Mtns. Conservancy
<input type="checkbox"/> Corrections, Department of	<input type="checkbox"/> State Lands Commission
<input type="checkbox"/> Delta Protection Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Clean Water Grants
<input type="checkbox"/> Education, Department of	<input type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Water Quality
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> SWRCB: Water Rights
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fish & Game Region # <u>4</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
<input type="checkbox"/> Food & Agriculture, Department of	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Toxic Substances Control, Department of
<input type="checkbox"/> Forestry and Fire Protection, Department of	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water Resources, Department of
<input type="checkbox"/> General Services, Department of	
<input type="checkbox"/> Health Services, Department of	Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing & Community Development	Other: _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Native American Heritage Commission	

Local Public Review Period (to be filled in by lead agency)

Starting Date _____ Ending Date _____

Lead Agency (Complete if applicable):

Consulting Firm: _____ Applicant: _____
 Address: _____ Address: _____
 City/State/Zip: _____ City/State/Zip: _____
 Contact: _____ Phone: _____
 Phone: _____

Signature of Lead Agency Representative: Juergen Vespermann

Digitally signed by Juergen Vespermann
 Date: 2021.04.19 15:26:28 -07'00'

Date: 04-19-2021

Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code. Reference: Section 21161, Public Resources Code.

Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Tulare City Widening Project

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Lead Agency, is preparing an environmental document to address impacts associated with the proposed freeway widening and interchange improvement project on State Route 99 in Tulare, California. The document will be prepared as a joint document pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Caltrans will be preparing an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) for the project, which is known as the Tulare City Widening project. As required by CEQA, Caltrans is distributing this Notice of Preparation and requesting comments from responsible and trustee agencies regarding the significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and reasonable mitigation measures that will be discussed in the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment. An Initial Study has not been prepared for this project and therefore is not attached to this Notice of Preparation.

Project Location

The project stretches from just south of the Avenue 200 overcrossing to just north of the Prosperity Avenue overcrossing (post miles 25.4 to 30.6) in the City of Tulare in Tulare County.

Project History

Work began on this project in 2019. Prior to the start of formal environmental studies, the Design and Environmental teams reassessed the three build alternatives presented in the Project Initiation Document that was signed in 2009:

- Alternative 1 proposed widening the existing four-lane freeway to a six-lane freeway by constructing the new lanes in the median. An auxiliary lane would be added along the outside northbound lane between Bardsley Avenue and the Hillman Street off-ramp. Construction of that lane would require the acquisition of approximately 100 residences and some businesses. In addition, the existing overcrossings at Tulare Avenue (State Route 137), Tulare pedestrian overcrossing, and Cross Avenue would be reconstructed to raise the bridges.
- Alternative 2 proposed widening the existing four-lane freeway to an eight-lane freeway by constructing two additional lanes in each direction outside the existing lanes. All seven overcrossings would be reconstructed, as would all interchanges within the project limits. New drainage basins would be needed at five locations. This alternative would acquire more than 200 homes and businesses along both sides of the freeway.
- Alternative 3 proposed widening the existing four-lane freeway to a six-lane freeway by constructing the new lanes in the median. The inside and outside

shoulders would be widened. All work would take place within the existing Caltrans right-of-way; no right-of-way acquisition was anticipated.

On August 26, 2019, the Project Development Team, including the Tulare County Association of Governments and representatives of the City of Tulare, agreed to develop Alternative 3 as the sole build alternative for the project. The reasons that Alternatives 1 and 2 were not brought forward for environmental analysis were the excessive right-of-way acquisition costs, the large numbers of people who would have been displaced and required relocation, other community impacts including the potential for direct impacts to environmental justice neighborhoods, and impacts to Tulare Santa Fe Trail Park that would have required an Individual Section 4(f) analysis and mitigation.

At the request of the Tulare County Association of Governments, in the summer of 2020 Caltrans added reconstruction of the Paige Avenue interchange to the project design. This design included two roundabouts at the ramp termini.

During the initial environmental analysis process, Caltrans determined that an Environmental Impact Report would be needed to obtain environmental compliance under CEQA due to the increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and increased greenhouse gasses generated by construction and operation of the facility. Because it has not yet been determined by Caltrans what types and amount of mitigation would be adequate to reduce a significant impact to “less than significant with mitigation” for vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gasses, it was determined that the CEQA document should be elevated to an Environmental Impact Report. The Project Development Team, including the project sponsor Tulare County Association of Governments, agreed with the determination to prepare an Environmental Impact Report.

In January 2021, the Project Development Team, including the Tulare County Association of Governments and representatives of the City of Tulare, agreed to increase the scope of the project. The existing Paige Avenue overcrossing is now proposed to be removed and replaced with a new bridge, and two additional roundabouts on Paige Avenue would be built at Blackstone Street and Laspina Street.

Description of the Project

Caltrans proposes to widen State Route 99 in the City of Tulare from just south of the Avenue 200 overcrossing to just north of the Prosperity Avenue overcrossing (post miles 25.4 to 30.6). One lane would be constructed in each direction in the existing freeway median to create a six-lane freeway, divided by a concrete median barrier. The existing lanes and shoulders of mainline State Route 99, as well as the ramps, would be rehabilitated. A second lane would be added to the northbound and southbound Bardsley Avenue on-ramps. Ramp metering would be added at these interchanges: Paige Avenue, Bardsley Avenue, and Tulare Avenue (State Route 137). North of the Avenue 200 overcrossing, the existing southbound lanes would be realigned to adjoin the existing northbound lanes for a distance of about three-quarters of a mile (post miles 25.62 to 26.35) to eliminate a non-standard curve. Four new drainage basins would be

added. A landscape replacement project would be implemented after construction is completed.

In addition, the existing Paige Avenue interchange would be reconstructed to a tight diamond layout with roundabouts at the ramp ends. Two additional roundabouts would be constructed on Paige Avenue at Blackstone Street and Laspina Street. The Paige Avenue overcrossing would be replaced with a wider structure with two lanes in each direction and a pedestrian/bicycle shared path on both sides.

The project would potentially acquire narrow strips of land from commercial properties and vacant lots in the Paige Avenue interchange area and along the Bardsley Avenue interchange southbound and northbound on-ramps. A few commercial properties would potentially be full acquisitions.

Project Alternatives

One build alternative and the no-build alternative are proposed for this project.

Potential Environmental Effects of the Project

Aesthetics

Oleanders and trees in the median would be removed. Landscape trees and shrubs would be removed from the sides of the freeway to construct the project.

Air Quality

A project-level air quality conformity analysis is required because Tulare County is in nonattainment status for federal air quality standards for ozone, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.

Biology

Initial biological surveys were conducted, and no impacts to species are anticipated. Potential impacts to the Tulare Main Canal will be determined.

Paleontology

Scientifically significant paleontological resources underlying the project area in the Quaternary Modesto Formation and the Pleistocene Riverbank Formation would be affected by the proposed project.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

This project does not achieve the State's greenhouse gas emissions reductions for 2029. Capacity-increasing projects require a quantitative analysis using emission factors models developed by the Air Resources Board to estimate greenhouse gas emissions.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Potential hazardous waste impacts involve asbestos-containing materials on buildings and structures, aerially deposited lead on surface soils, and petroleum hydrocarbons on

gas station properties. Preliminary Site Investigations would be prepared on affected private parcels to identify the extent of the contamination, if any, prior to parcel acquisition.

Noise

A preliminary noise study determined future noise levels would be higher at some locations adjacent to the new facility if the proposed project is built. Soundwalls will be proposed at locations where the design-year noise levels would exceed the federal Noise Abatement Criteria.

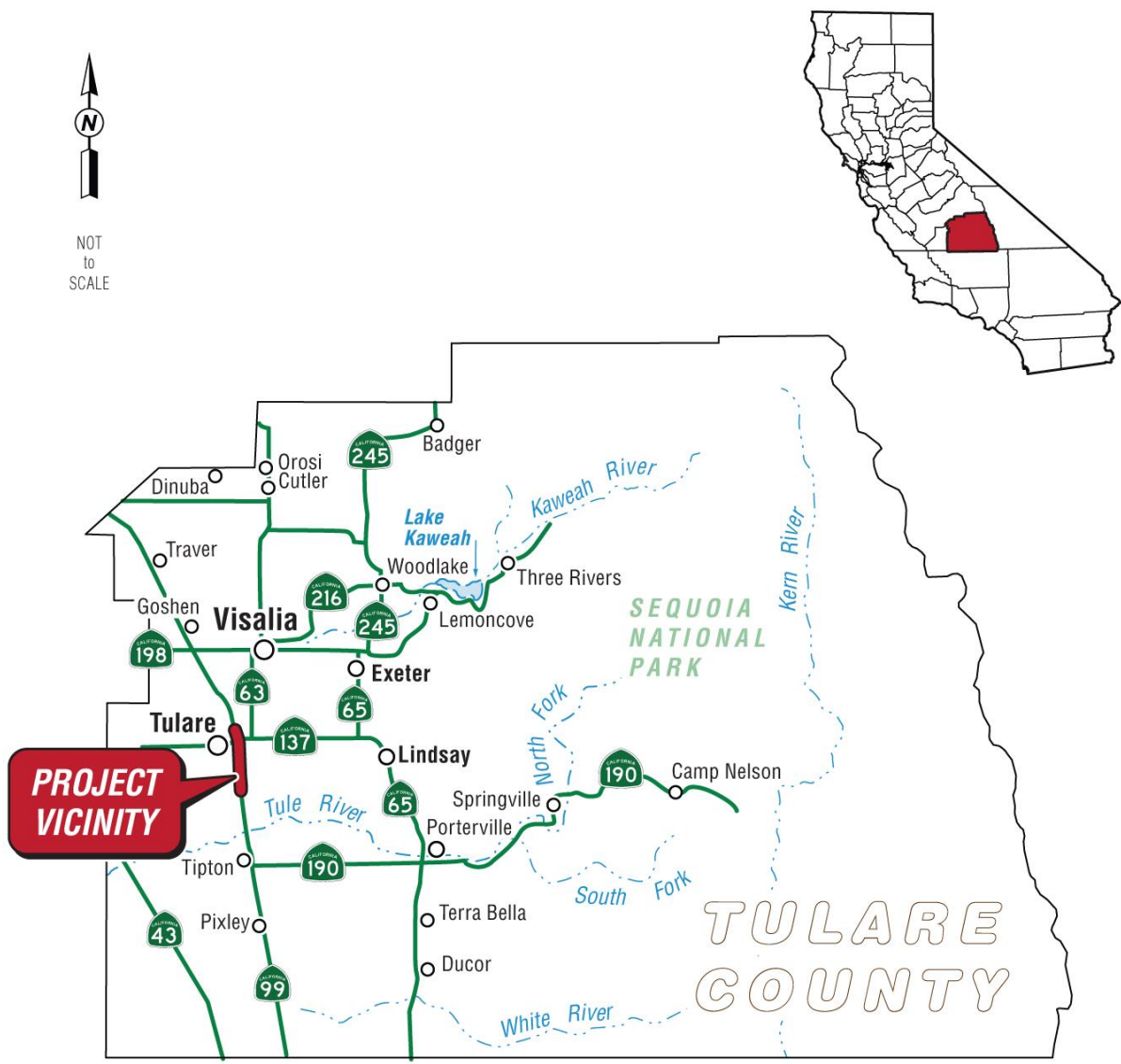
Transportation (Vehicle Miles Traveled)

Senate Bill 743 concurrence and analysis of this transportation project's impact under CEQA due to increases in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) attributable to the project will be necessary because the project is considered a capacity-increasing improvement of State Route 99. If those impacts are significant, Caltrans will need to consider mitigation or alternatives.

Environmental Justice

Potential environmental impacts to potential environmental justice communities that could be directly or indirectly affected by the project will also be considered.

Project Vicinity Map



Project Location Map



Distribution List

State Clearinghouse, 1400 Tenth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Tulare Public Library, Heidi Clark, Library Manager, 475 North M Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Rob A. Hunt, City Manager, City of Tulare, 411 East Kern Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Michael W. Miller, PE, City Engineer, City of Tulare, 411 East Kern Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Luis Nevarez, Fire Chief, City of Tulare, 800 South Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Craig Miller, Community Services Director, City of Tulare, 830 South Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Mario Anaya, Principal Planner, City of Tulare, 411 East Kern Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Wes Hensley, Police Chief, City of Tulare, 260 South M Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Richard Lujan, Airport Operations Manager, City of Tulare, 3981 South K Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Trisha Whitfield, Public Works Director, City of Tulare, 3981 South K Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Stephen C. Harrell, Council Member, District 3, City of Tulare, 411 East Kern Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Dennis A. Mederos, Council Member, District 4, City of Tulare, 411 East Kern Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Patrick Isherwood, Council Member, District 5, City of Tulare, 411 East Kern Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Tulare Joint Union High School District, Tony Rodriguez, Superintendent, 426 North Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Tulare City School District, Brian Hollingshead, Superintendent, 600 North Cherry Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Pete Vander Poel, Tulare County Supervisor, 2800 West Burrel Avenue, Visalia, CA 93291

Charlie Norman, Chief, Tulare County Fire Department, 835 South Akers Street, Visalia, CA 93277

Andrew Lockman, Manager, Tulare County Office of Emergency Services, 5957 South Mooney Boulevard, Visalia, CA 93277

Roland P. Hill, Clerk-Recorder, Tulare County, 221 South Mooney Boulevard, Courthouse, Room 105, Visalia, CA 93291

Reed Schenke, Director, Tulare County Resource Management Agency, 5961 South Mooney Boulevard, Visalia, CA 93277

Theodore Smalley, Executive Director, Tulare County Association of Governments, 210 North Church Street, Suite B, Visalia, CA 93291

Samir Sheikh, Executive Director, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, 1990 East Gettysburg Avenue, Fresno, CA 93726

Tashia Clemons, Director, Planning and Environment, Federal Highway Administration, 650 Capitol Mall, Suite 4-100, Sacramento, CA 95814

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, CA 95825

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, Ashley Werner, Attorney, 2210 San Joaquin Street, Fresno, CA 93721

Tulare Irrigation District, 6826 Avenue 240, Tulare, CA 93274

Prithi Paul Singh, 1297 East Paige Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Courtney and Hazel Roche, 22674 Road 148, Tulare, CA 93274

Love's Travel Stop, 2700 South Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Ridenour Enterprises, 3239 West Ashlan Avenue, Fresno, CA 93722

Robert W. and Richard T. Bender, 283 East Estate Drive, Tulare, CA 93274

Scott Wilbourn, Wilbourn LLC, 1101 Security Court, Tulare, CA 93274

Security Court Realty, 1100 Security Court, Tulare, CA 93274

Philip M. and Jesslyn C. Santos, 5516 West Judy Avenue, Visalia, CA 93277

Phelps and Santos Family LP, 2473 Presidential Drive, Tulare, CA 93274

Oleta Gomes, 1019 North Manor Drive, Tulare, CA 93274

Abbona Family LP, 15236 Hawthorn Avenue, Chino Hills, CA 91709

Faria Family II LP, P.O. Box 1137, Tipton, CA 93272

Surinder Singh and Jasvir K. Kang, 1301 East Paige Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Flying J Travel Center, 1109 East Paige Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Southern California Edison, 2425 South Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Tulare Inn Mobile Home Park, 636 Lakemead Way, Emerald Hills, CA 94062

Tulare Inn Mobile Home Park, 1401 East Paige Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Tulare Mobile Home Park, John Duron, Manager, 320 North Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Tulare Mobile Home Park LLC, 3511 Del Paso Road, Suite 160, Sacramento, CA 95835

JCH Family LP, 5917 West Elowin Drive, Visalia, CA 93291

Luis and Maria Almodovar, 14619 Clark Avenue, Bellflower, CA 90706

RNK Enterprises LLC, 2006 West Prosperity Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Carol C. Coelho, 1200 North Margaret Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Willard William Wilkins, 139 South Salida Place, Tulare, CA 93274

Vincent G. Hovannisian, P.O. Box 3665, Fresno, CA 93650

Frank Arano, 1628 East Burton Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Dana C. Brummer, 1293 East Sequoia Avenue, Tulare, CA 93274

Jorge Molina, 339 South Dayton Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Saputo Cheese, 800 East Paige Avenue, Tulare CA 93274

United Truck Service, 2811 South Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Seventh Day Adventist Church, 494 North Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Church of Christ of Tulare, 500 North Blackstone Street, Tulare, CA 93274

Jesus Arambula and Damariz Mendoza Leon, 16613 Millwood Way, Bakersfield, CA 93314

Diane Feinstein, U.S. Senator, 2500 Tulare Street, Suite 4290, Fresno, CA 93721

Alex Padilla, U.S. Senator, 2500 Tulare Street, Suite 5290, Fresno, CA 93721

Devin Nunes, Congressman, 22nd District, 113 North Church Street, Suite 208, Visalia, CA 93291

Shannon Grove, State Senator, 16th District, 5701 Truxtun Avenue, Suite 150, Bakersfield, CA 93309

Devon J. Mathis, Assembly Member, 26th District, 100 West Willow Plaza, Suite 405, Visalia, CA 93291

Darlene Franco, Chairperson, Wukchumni Tribal Council, P.O. Box 6576, Visalia, CA 93290

Kenneth Woodrow, Chairperson, Eshom Valley Band of Indians/Wuksachi Indian Community, 1179 Rock Haven Court, Salinas, CA 93906

Julie Turner, Secretary, Kern Valley Indian Council, P.O. Box 1010, Lake Isabella, CA 93240

Robert Gomez, Jr., Chairman, Tubatulabals of Kern County, P.O. Box 226, Lake Isabella, CA 93240

Neil Peyron, Chairman, Tule River Indian Tribe, P.O. Box 589, Porterville, CA 93258

Octavio Escobedo III, Chair, Tejon Indian Tribe, P.O. Box 640, Arvin, CA 93203

Leo Sisco, Chairperson, Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria, P.O. Box 8, Lemoore, CA 93245

Brenda Lavall, Chairperson, Table Mountain Rancheria, P.O. Box 410, Friant, CA 93626